1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

512 462 356 children. If they are of school age, she must dress them, feed them, and get them off to school. She does all the cooking and washing up after meals and keeps the teapot always ready. Each morning she sweeps the house, makes the beds, and so on. The clothes of the household are her care as well, and the indispensable and constant mending of them which rough wear makes necessary all falls to her lot.

This household work is familiar to us; the point of itemizing it is merely to make clear the confined sphere in which the woman's recurrent and indispensable duties fall.

512 462 356 231 234 But her work stretches beyond the house door. In the morning after breakfast she takes the milk buckets and milks the cows in the sheds in the haggard. This is merely one of the many trips she makes in and out of the kitchen doors for fuel, for water, to feed and tend the animals and the fowl. Her milking finished, she must bring the milk in and separate it. In recent years, more prosperous farms have been able to make use of the separator. If there is none, she must set the milk in large pans and allow the cream to rise. The whole process of the conversion of milk to butter is her charge.

512 462 231 After the morning milking and the feeding of her human charges, she must turn her attention to the feeding of the farm animals, especially the young ones. The cows and horses are not her province, but all the care of the calves, pigs, and fowl falls to her lot. She prepares a mixture of warm milk and grain for the calves, feeding them from a bucket. They must not be allowed to suck, as the milk is meant for human consumption. Then she boils a large kettle of potatoes over the fire for the chickens and the pigs, or takes them the leavings of the previous day.

512 462 [251] Before noon she hangs another kettle over the fire filled with potatoes for the use of the family. In season she adds white cabbage and nearly always includes a portion or two of bacon, some of it home cured in brine to resemble salt PORK.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

221 246 also one that calls forth the united efforts of the whole family. It is a race, too, against time and rainy weather, and every effort must be bent to mow, rake, and let dry, and stack the meadow grasses, first in small haycocks, then in a great hayrick in the haggard, before rain brings rot to the lush crop. The farmers well speak of the harvest as "saving the hay."

221 241 [407 556] No sooner is the hay saved than the corn crops demand attention. Rye and oats are ready for the scythe or the mowing machine (only the larger farmers have reapers) by late August. The farmer and his sons must bind it, stack it, and leave it for several days drying. Later they will return to the fields and cart it back to the haggard for threshing. Not long ago the flail was still the most frequent means of threshing among the small farmers. In recent years steam-[407] powered threshing machines make the rounds, and threshing, which under the older system seems to have taken place as need arose for the grain, takes place now more regularly in late September and early October.

221 241 ● 251 With the bringing in of the corn, the agricultural year draws to a close. Through October and November turnips and mangels are ready to be "pulled" and stored in the fields, near at hand to the haggard, in straw- and earth-covered pits. The potatoes which remain in the ridges must be turned up with spade and plough and similarly stored for the winter. All the root crops are indispensable supplies for men and animals during the months to come when there is no grass. The winter's supply of turf must be brought to the haggard from the reeks alongside of the bogs, where it [492] has been drying for the summer. The carting is an intermittent labor, performed by the men at odd times when they are free of other duties. As winter comes with November cold and rain, the cattle must be housed and made ready for the long, dark days of no grass to come; and the farmer is busy with them acquiring and disposing of his stock, as

221 231

5: Ó Danachair I-5 (no date) 1956 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Irish Farmyard Types

CAOIMHIN Ó DANACHAIR

DUBLIN

The fundamental need of shelter from the elements and protection during the hours of darkness is doubled for the farmer, who must provide shelter and protection for his livestock, his gear and his harvested crops as well as for himself and his family; the type of shelter which he provides is influenced not only by his traditional methods of using building materials but also by the type of husbandry in which he engages, the local conditions of soil and climate, and his own social and economic position in the community.

The climate of Ireland is mild and moist. The average January temperatures range from 40° to 44° F. over the whole country, while those of July range from 57° to 60°, and the average annual rainfall over five-sixths of the country is from 30 to 50 inches, with from 175 to 250 days on which some rain falls. Heavy snow, great cold or long continued frosts are very exceptional, as are long droughts or great heat. In such a mild climate hay and unthreshed corn may be stored outdoors in ricks or stacks, and this was the usual method of storage in Ireland until quite recently; it still is the usual method on many farms. Other crops, such as potatoes and roots, and even grain and apples were, in many parts of Ireland, stored outdoors in suitable pits or containers; this, too, is still often done in the case of potatoes. Consequently storage space for the harvested crops was not the most urgent of the farmer's building needs. Again, the mildness of the climate permits the keeping in the open throughout the year of certain kinds of livestock, such as sheep and dry cattle, while on the other hand milking cows must be kept indoors during the winter and early spring. Thus it may be said that, in general, the size and form of an Irish farmyard depends upon the number of milking cows kept by the farmer.

Although, in Ireland, the raising of crops, especially of grain crops, was neither small in volume or unimportant in rural economy, it was in most times and places secondary to cattlebreeding, stock-raising and dairying. The evidence of archaeology and history reveals the importance of cattle from a very early date down to our own time; even yet, in many parts of the country a man's wealth is reckoned not by the size of his farm but by the number of his cattle, and the area of a farm is commonly reckoned by the number of cattle which it will support—"the grass of ten cows" is still a familiar term.

Farms are generally classified as small, medium or large, according to their area. A farm of less

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

among the hill pastures. In spring, after a long winter, the cows were often so weak that they had to be carried out of the byre. When sufficiently restored they were driven, together with the sheep and in some cases the poultry, to the hills. In Donegal, according to an account written a century ago, " the migration usually took place upon a fixed day, the junior members of the family generally perform the journey on the top of the household goods, and thus the chair or two, the creels, and the iron pot, the piggin, and the various selected *et cetera*—as if invested with a sort of dull locomotive power—creep along the roads. The little churn is slung on one side of the animal, into which the youngest child is often thrust, its head being the only part visible."

Many townland names ending in " booley " or " boley " assist us in our search for evidence, while in many places the actual remains of the booleys can still be seen. They were generally built of sods or turf, or of wicker-work faced with sods, and roofed with branches and heather. Some were circular and others square or rectangular, and the latter had two opposite doors through which, it seems, the cows passed in turn as they were milked inside, a tradition which is still kept up in the two-doored cabins of Co. Kerry, where Dr. Campbell has described how, in summer, the cows are milked in the kitchen, entering at the front door and being driven out by the back. The booleys were built in clusters, the inhabitants of a particular " town " presumably living together. Butter-making was the chief occupation, and the food of the herders consisted largely of " whitemeats " that is milk products such as curds and whey. Cheese seems to have been of minor importance, though sheep were milked and it is probable that, as is customary among the transhumants of southern Europe, the milk was made into cheese. The butter appears to have been preserved—it was un-salted—by burying it in wooden, skin, bark or cloth containers in the bog. This " bog-butter " frequently turns up in turf-cutting operations : it is white or yellowish in colour and smells like ripe old cheese. A keg dug up in Co. Meath was found to contain over seven stones of butter.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 Ireland, which is the province of the wheel-bellows (Fig. 27)
352 a contrivance which produces a powerful draught under the fire. Another feature of the fireplace is the small keeping-holes (" boles ") in the wall, which may contain the clay pipes or the knitting : they are usually reserved for special purposes and seem to have their peculiar association with either male or female use. The alarm clock is often kept in one of these
[805] recesses—on the south side, I have been told, because that is the side where the sun tells the time—but there are cabins where the rooster is the only time-keeper, his perch being the long pole, or, in the old days, the sugán, which crosses the cabin in front of the fire and which is used in the daytime for drying clothes.

251 Near the fire too is the wooden meal chest or " ark,"
352 where the oatmeal is stored. One of the ancient customs, now
[857] almost dead, is the " tramping " of the meal, the children being periodically placed in the ark, barefooted, to tread it down. Alternatively the meal was stored in a large hogshead immediately behind the chimney, in the " room," where it would be kept dry without taking up the valuable hearth space. Under the brace you may perhaps see a lump of bacon or a dried fish or two, and this is the place where the horse collar is hung in some districts. We shall return to the other fireside gear later in the chapter.

354 In some areas, especially in the north and north-west, that is the province of the gable hearth, the brace and canopy are rarely seen, their place being taken by a stone or brick chimney (Fig. 29). It seems probable that houses of the outshot type, at least, never had the brace, which would be difficult to erect owing to the recessed side-wall. There are
352 many problems which require study in this connexion. Where possible the bed, whether half-recessed in its cailleach or not, lies at one side of the fire : alternatively there may be a large settle—often convertible into a bed—against one of the side walls. This is generally a solid piece of furniture, and I have seen some very attractive examples of bog-oak.

The most noticeable article of furniture in the room is the dresser, which though generally of deal and lacking the fine

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP of P. 72 -- Analyst]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

rush-light holders with attached candle-sockets. The dipped 373
rushes were sometimes plaited together to make the light last 416
longer. It is of interest to note that the war-time shortage of oil and candles has led to a revival of the use of rush-lights in some country districts.

A great amount of interesting information might be 262
collected about the food of the Irish peasantry, the methods of cooking, times of meals and the many customs and superstitions connected with food and drink. We may close this chapter with a few remarks about some foods other than bread It is curious to reflect that the diet of some western districts, "potatoes for 10 months and Indian meal for two," is so largely dependent on crops of New World origin! Potatoes were made tasty with "kitchen" or "point," that is a bit of [25] ●
relish such as a salted herring; and in difficult times they were only half boiled so that the hard core, called the "moon" or "bone," might prolong the processes of digestion. In Ulster the name given to July was "the blue month" because it was a time of scarcity between the old potatoes and the new crop, but generally speaking milk products were consumed during the summer months. Meat, by which the countryman means [25]
beef, was often salted down and reserved for winter use, but meat eating tended to be restricted to certain seasons or festivals such as Christmas, Shrove and Easter.

Another seasonal food was the "sowens" or porridge made from soured "meal-seeds" sifted from the oatmeal. It was traditionally eaten at Hallowe'en; and the Irish name for the 1st of November is Samhain, or "Sowin." I have heard this dish nicknamed "water bewitched." The thin liquid resulting from steeping the fine meal-dust was also drunk and called "thewin," a substitute for buttermilk. A kind of whey ("troander") was made by mixing sweet milk and buttermilk, and "drammock" was a harvest drink consisting of raw oatmeal and water. Then there is the boxty bread made from potato flour and cooked on the griddle. Many traditional foods and drinks are now little more than memories and of some, for instance "heather beer," the country folk say that "the secret has been lost." But one might still

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

343
234 Behind the cows there runs a slab-lined drain or groop, which carries the refuse through the "groop hole" in the wall to the midden. Hanging from the rannel-tree you may perchance see a charm in the shape of a perforated flint [176] pebble, while over the door, decaying Brigid's Crosses dating [751] back for several successive years show that the cattle are under the special protection of the Irish saint. In the byre gable it is not uncommon to see a dove-cote, at any rate along [235] the east coast where English influence has been strong since Norman times. Pigeons are fond of heat and thrive near farm animals. In Lecale, Co. Down, I have seen nests made of straw rope hung above the horses in the stable.

343
251 The barn is not infrequently built above the byre. When the dwelling house alongside remains, in the Irish tradition, single-storied, the effect of the towering barn is rather incongruous. This arrangement makes it simple to feed the animals, provides a springy wooden floor for thrashing, and also gives a better draught for the purpose. Moreover, the raised position helps to make the corn secure from damp and rats. The barn has opposite doors and half doors to regulate the through draught and to keep out stray animals while work goes on inside. Access to the barn is obtained by external stone steps or a sloping ramp, under which the stone dog kennel is often built in. Some of the activities and appurtenances of the barn are described in Chapter 14.

343 Little need be said about the stable, since small farms have as a rule only one mare. In the old-time single-roomed kitchen-byres, the mare had her stall alongside the cows, and you will sometimes see the keeping-hole above the back door where the brush and curry comb were stored. The stable, like the byre, may be attached to the house or may be separate, but for convenience and economy it tends to be built as part of a range of buildings. In decayed rundale clusters now occupied by only one or two holders there were, ready to hand, many old dwelling houses which could be put to different uses as "offices."

Before we turn to the housing of other livestock, mention should be made of the turf-house, for which many different

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

similar farm rubbish, which is roughly thatched with rushes. In building up loose material of this kind, as in making a turf-stack or a potato clamp, the hipped form is naturally adopted (Fig. 42) and *cf.* the turf stack or rick (Fig. 93). I have often seen old houses or outbuildings with upright gables the triangular tops of which, above the level of the eaves, are built of sods or turf. While other explanations may be offered, it seems to me that this carries on the tradition of the "flat" roof and hints that it was more generally found in former times.

Fig. 42.

Corn-drying kilns were mentioned above as an example of structures which have descended in the social scale. It seems likely that constructionally they are miniature replicas of circular houses, and it is certainly true that they are now put to uses which cannot be called legitimate. They are used surreptitiously in preparing grain for making poteen, and I have seen examples built not long ago for drying a cargo of corn recovered from a wreck. A few generations ago every little village had its corn kiln, but the large kilns attached to corn mills have done away with them. So far as I have been able to find out the Irish kilns were all circular or semicircular and they were often built into a sloping hill. Some were open on top like a lime-kiln but others had a conical thatch. Again, one variety had the fire underneath while in another the heat was drawn along a flue from a fireplace some distance away. The corn was laid on a linen sheet resting on a carefully prepared bed of straw; hence the phrase "soft as kiln bedding." The dried corn was ground forthwith in a hand quern.

Although underground refuges or "souterrains"—called "caves" by country folk—come into the category of ancient monuments they deserve mention here for two reasons. The first is because they often show in their roofs the technique of corbelling described above. The second fact which gives them interest is that, though some are known to have been built in the Bronze Age, they have been used as hiding places at many periods. I have found in them "ammunition" of 1,000 years ago side by side with explosives dating from the

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

226 Hazel sticks are often used as fishing rods, but the sea itself may cast up gifts in the shape of bamboo poles. In a general way each species of fish must be tempted with its appropriate bait or lure in its proper season, and when the varied traditions and fish of different stretches of coast are recalled it will be realized that a vast amount of information could be collected on this topic. The bait necessary for bottom fishing—mussels, limpets, "slaters," "buckies," crab, lug-worm and so on—is different from that used in 'streaming"—young eels, small fish, or artificial lures in the form of white feathers or hair.

Then there are the different methods employed in attaching the bait, in throwing the lines or using the rod both in rock and boat fishing. In Strangford Lough, County Down, for example, the rod is plunged deep into the water from the stern of the rowing-boat, the swirl of the current helping to agitate the streaming bait. An ingenious device found on the west coast is the "protected hook" used for fishing amongst sea-weeds: to prevent the fouling of the hook a shield made of the carapace of a crab is attached to the line. The stone sinker is made from a pebble by chipping out two notches to hold the line. Nor should we fail to mention that "the best hooks in the world" were formerly made at Limerick: the name is still attached to the graded hooks one buys in seaside towns.

In the north of Ireland the fish most commonly caught from the rocks or from small boats inshore is the dark coal-fish, variously called, according to its age and size, cudden or gelpin, pickock or pickies, glashan or blockan, grey lord, [251] stanlock, black jack, and so on. Lightly salted, the split blockan may be seen drying on the thatched roofs of houses along many a stretch of coast. A close rival in popularity and abundance is the pollack or "lythe." Ling, one of our oldest foods, is still, like the salted herring which go so well [251] with potatoes, a favourite in rural Ireland. They used to be dried beside the kelp kilns down the west coast. These

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

monotonous chant of three or four lines; the last phrase of each line was very often *go deo deo-deo* (= for aye, aye, aye), the vowel sound of *o* easily accommodating itself to the prolonged chant. Another termination was *nios-mó-mó-mó* (= no more, more, more). I still recollect one touching line of the dirge: it was—*tá mo theachín follamh go deo-deo-deo*, 'my little house is empty for evermore, more, more.' Unfortunately, I know nothing about music, but the chant reminded me of the fourth line of the old air of 'The Blackbird.'" 764 533

Owing to the stone of the island not being easily worked the grave-stones are usually rough, shapeless slabs, or are rudely chipped into the form of a cross, while the rest of the grave is covered with flat stones. 764 324

A large number of the men formerly went as harvesters to England and Scotland, where some of the young girls still go as servants; but very few do so now, though they say the harvesting paid well. It is more the fashion now to go to America even for a few years; and instances have occurred of people shutting up their houses, leaving all their furniture and utensils as they were, going off to the United States for three or four years, and then coming back, resuming possession, and falling into all the old ways and customs as if nothing very unusual had occurred. It is quite a common occurrence for young men to go to America for seven or eight years (generally to the neighbourhood of Pittsburg to work at the foundries there), at the end of that time to return home, settle down, and get married. Many of the girls go to Scotland, as servants, for five or six months of the year to assist their parents at home. 464 167 [357]

3. *Food.*—The dietary is much more varied than that of many of the inhabitants of the inland districts; it consists largely of fish of various kinds, potatoes, and home-made bread. Flesh meat is rarely tasted except at Christmas or some other great occasion, when a little mutton may be eaten, but fowl and geese are occasionally used. The fish which forms the staple of the diet is eaten fresh in spring and summer time, and large supplies of it are salted and dried in the sun for the winter's use; the kinds cured are mainly ling, sea-bream, and glassan. 262 [251]

Butter and cheese are not used; and eggs, though forming part of the regular food, are mostly employed as a purchasing medium for tea, sugar, tobacco, &c., at the principal shop, whence they are forwarded to Westport. [437]

Tea has come greatly into use, and is taken in large quantities with 272

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

241 The manures used are mainly sea-weed and farmyard manure. In the mountains the practice of burning the land is common.

The pasture is fairly good, but the cattle and sheep are inferior,
231 though efforts are now being made to improve the breeds.

An average family has a couple of pigs, a cow or two and some sheep, a large number of fowl, geese and ducks, and a donkey or horse.

372 The fuel used is turf obtained from the bogs, which are extensive, except in the southern part of the Mullet; and the islands which have now no turf of their own import from Achill or Ballycroy.

A very considerable quantity of kelp is made, on which, in the
381 Mullet, a royalty is charged by the landlord. About Portacloy there is no royalty paid.

Fishing employs many of the men, though until lately the fish
226 taken was merely for home use. The kinds usually caught are turbot, mackerel, ling, cod, and herrings; all of these, except the turbot, are now cured at the fishing stations established at several parts of the coast by the government. For home consumption, much
● [251] is eaten fresh, but a good deal of it is roughly salted for winter use.

Lobsters are mostly taken by the men of Inishkea, and by a couple of boats at Portacloy. The Inishkea men, while at this
[342] fishing, mostly live in very primitive huts on Inisglora, where they stay away from their families for six weeks or two months at a time.
[435] The lobsters are sold in Belmullet for about five shillings per dozen, and are sent by car to Ballina and thence to England. The lobster pots are mostly of home manufacture.

The fishery stations mentioned above now afford employment to many who formerly had no means of disposing of their surplus time and fish.

439 Large quantities of eggs are exported from this district, Belmullet
235 being the largest egg exporting centre in Ireland. They are brought into the town by the country people and sold to dealers, who, when they have collected a sufficient quantity, send them on to Ballina, whence they are sent to England. Butter is also exported in the
[234] summer and autumn.

273 Illicit distilling is carried on to some extent in this district, though not at all so prevalent as formerly. The stills are made in the people's homes by travelling tinkers who live with the family until the job is finished.

286 A good deal of homespun is made, but the dyes are not obtained

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

252 As throughout Highland Britain it was the dramatic fall in the
262 price of wheat in the 1880s, thanks to imports from America,
that changed the eating habits of the people and led to a decline
171 in the consumption of oaten and barley bread. The commercial baking of oven-bread from imported wheat is thus a fairly recent development virtually confined to the large towns, especially the milling ports, and its distribution through the rural areas explains the ubiquitous bread-vans of the country roads. We should probably make an exception of the English-settled parts of the east coast in the Pale as well as in Bargy. Dublin and Drogheda have a rare advantage in Ireland in that, thanks to their relatively dry climate, grain need not be kiln-dried before milling. The town bakeries cater for country tastes by providing an extraordinary variety of cakes and farls as well as
[256] standard loaves. One of the big Belfast bakeries turns out some seventy varieties of plain and fancy bread which are distributed over several Ulster counties. In the Scottish Highlands, similarly, most of the bread consumed comes from a Glasgow factory: home-made, even locally-made, yeast-bread is almost
[493] unknown. 'The van' is therefore one of the necessities of life: its forerunner was the tea-van, famous for its fast high-stepping horses, once a familiar sight in the Irish countryside.

262 The baking of thin bread has steadily declined under this
252 urban competition. White bread and stewed tea are woefully inadequate as a staple diet but there were perhaps greater gastric evils in indigestible soda bread made with unboiled water from surface wells. The use of buttermilk and above all a large consumption of butter were, however, traditional. On balance the housewife has profited, for she was truly the slave of the fire. Thin bread has the disadvantage of going stale quickly, and a good housewife was expected always to have fresh bread ready. Labourers have been known to refuse to work on farms where there was not a daily baking of bread. The baking board or trough hung ready to hand on the wall,
● 251 and the meal was stored near the fire to keep it dry (Figs. 18
[857] and 21). Old people have told me how, when they were children, they were called on periodically to tramp the meal in its wooden chest or ark, treading it down with bare feet to drive out the air and lessen the risk of its going musty. In Wales the meal-

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

chest was considered to be the best place to store a well-dried ham.

Originally the flat round oatcakes were baked on a flat stone, and such flagstone griddles continued to be used in the nineteenth century in parts of Co. Kerry. A late seventeenth-century traveller wrote: 'Their general food is a thin oatcake which they bake upon a broad flat stone made hot, a little sheep's milk cheese, or goat's milk, boiled leeks and some roots.'[1] In Yorkshire the flagstone was built-in over a separate fire and gave way slowly to the iron 'bakestone'. The bread was hardened in front of the fire, resting against a three-legged 'bread-stick' of the type shown in Fig. 25. Representations of bread on the sculptured high crosses of the Early Middle Ages show just such round discs. The traditional form of thin bread, however, is the farl (fardel), shaped like a quarter-circle. The large circular cake is marked with a cross so that it can be readily broken into quarters (farls) after baking and hardening. The 'harning' is done on a wrought iron 'harnen stand' or toaster which has taken the place of the simple bread-stick. It is worth noticing that the Beltane cakes, formerly eaten at the fires which were lit on hill-tops on May Eve, were baked, in Scotland at any rate, before the fire without touching iron.[2] I have seen a few examples of carved stone breadstands which were designed to bake the bread in front of the fire, and no doubt rough stones were originally used for this purpose. The baking stones are elaborately carved and often carry dates ranging, in Scottish examples, from 1674 to 1791.[3] Irish examples seem to be confined to Ulster and they probably represent one of the many culture traits introduced from Scotland (Fig. 25, 6). The wrought iron toasters are tastefully designed and exhibit a great variety of ornament. Specimens from north Ulster and from Scotland display an almost Spanish exuberance in the intricacies of their spiral terminals, and one would like to know if they have their counterparts along the Atlantic coasts of Europe. They are now for the most part museum pieces, for one rarely sees them in use and great numbers have found their way to the scrap heap in the last half century.

[1] 'A Tour in Ireland in 1672–74', *J.C.H.A. Soc.* x (1904), 96.
[2] J. M. McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the North-east of Scotland* (1929).
[3] A. Mitchell, *The Past in the Present* (1880), 239.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

262 the staple was butter and oatcake rather than oatcake and butter. When bread was made from gritty quern-ground flour the butter would have served as a lubricant to assist the swallowing process. 'They swallow lumps of butter mixed with oatmeal', wrote Fynes Moryson about the year 1600, 'and love no meat more than sour milk curdled.'[1] When food was left out for the fairies it was generally oatmeal and butter: needless to say, particularly when accompanied by whiskey, it disappeared during the night. In the very high present-day Irish consumption of milk products we notice once more the survival of ancient custom, for milk products were the staple food of medieval times in all parts of the British Isles.[2] The Irish laws distinguish between summer and winter food, and the consumption of meat was almost confined to the winter months. Pork was the most highly esteemed meat, but no doubt deer and other products of the chase augmented the fare for the upper classes. Surplus cattle were presumably killed off at
251 Martinmas and salted as 'marts', but among the peasantry the emphasis was on milch cows, and cow's meat was fit only for stews. Butter—and whiskey also—was preserved in bogs to be available in the lean days of spring (Chapter XIV). On the other
234 hand there is little evidence of cheese-making apart from soft cheese, including that made from sheep's milk, and the Irish consumption of cheese is today probably the lowest in Europe. The making of hard cheese is a comparatively late development everywhere, so that Ireland may be said once more to have remained faithful to ancient practice. With a *per capita* consumption of 2·7 lb. in 1954, the Irish republic comes last in the fifteen countries for which figures are given in the U.S. Foreign Agricultural Circular quoted above; the highest is Norway with 19 lb. per head. I may add that I have found no record or tradition of the milking of sows which occurs in parts of Spain and which, it is suggested, may have been a Celtic custom.[3] It is said in Ireland that if a man drinks sow's milk he can see the wind for ever after.

[1]Fynes Moryson, *The Manners and Customs of Ireland*, 321.
[2]J. C. Drummond and A. Wilbraham, *The Englishman's Food* (1939), 51.
[3]R. U. Sayce, 'Milking and Dairying', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 51 (1951–52), 120–54.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

usually opposite the fire. The absence, in a country predominantly pastoral and consuming large quantities of milk products, of a building or room set aside as a dairy is at first sight strange. Milk cattle, however, were closely identified with the woman of the house, and as we have seen they commonly shared the kitchen with the family. Owing to the scarcity of winter feeding-stuffs, moreover, the supply of milk must have been, down to a couple of centuries ago, largely confined to the summer months and butter-making was therefore undertaken at the booley houses. It must have been difficult to store the considerable amounts of milk products required for winter food, especially when one remembers that most of the peasant houses were made of wattles, sods or mud, and there is some evidence, as we shall see in Chapter IX, that they were kept underground under the old Celtic economy, in even temperatures and safe from the depredations of animals.

However this may be, the kitchen is the traditional place for keeping the churn, and for churning. The stave-built upright plunge churn, prototype of the metal milk-churn which at first faithfully copied its shape, belongs to a family of wooden vessels which has been diffused across the Old World from Ireland to Tibet and now survives most abundantly towards the limits of its range (Fig. 30). Made by local coopers, Irish churns display a considerable variety in shape and size, the shapes differing regionally, the sizes depending on the number of cows kept on the farm, for they were 'made to measure'. The small barrel-shaped churn of the south-west, with a narrow vertical mouth, would appear to be the older style. The mouth, designed to hold a lid through a hole in which the churn staff passes, is usually a separate unit attached to the body by a join—the crib—skilfully contrived and concealed under one of the encircling hoops. Some old churns have hoops of split rods, hazel or sally, but it was reckoned lucky to have one of the hoops of rowan. The staves are invariably of oak: the circular base is made in three pieces, dowelled together and having the joins sealed with rushes. Small churns which have been dug out of the bogs are generally found to have been cut from the solid, and they often have projecting lugs perforated for ease of transport. Those with holed lids were certainly churns, but others

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

KILNS AND CLOCHAUNS

343 In discussing the association of pigs and clochauns, which may well have reached Ireland together, reference must be made to a curious variety of underground 'outhouse', the stone-built souterrain, which is frequently found attached to ancient farmsteads of the Dark Ages. Many thousands have been recorded from all parts of the country, and they have their counterparts in Scotland, Cornwall and western France. Stripped of their cover of earth, the chambers which are incorporated in many souterrains would resemble free-standing clochauns. The long galleries which are perhaps the most characteristic element in souterrains could have originated as passages into the buried chambers. Some of the chambers may have served as pigsties, but it is a more plausible theory that these structures, long regarded as refuge places, were primarily storage places, designed to maintain an even temperature for keeping food and especially milk products. The custom of building souterrains, which must have called for considerable labour and skill, seems to have stopped, after a long life, before the early Middle Ages. We do not know what cultural factors were responsible for this change of custom, or what forms of storage took the place of the 'coves', but the change marks one aspect of the decline of the old Gaelic world of rath and tuath which had passed its zenith by the tenth century. The practice of building underground storage places, however, did not entirely die out. K. Danaher has recorded stone-lined structures in Donegal, associated with still remembered booley-sites, which are said to have [251] been used for storing butter.[1] One wonders whether the custom of burying butter in the bogs (Chapter XIV) was generally adopted when souterrains were no longer built.

The souterrains, whatever their original purpose, have occasionally been pressed into service as hiding places for outlaws, for illegal possessions or small livestock. It is known that the Irish, in the worst days of landlordism, were in the habit of hiding their stock to avoid confiscation when they were in arrears of rent. Some examples, which had not been opened within living memory, were found, when entered, to reek strongly of animals. And I know one souterrain in Co. Antrim which is littered with the remains of home-made bombs dating

[1] K. Danaher, *J.R.S.A.I.*, 75 (1945), 204–12.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

are repaired and re-roofed with sods, and turf fires lit inside 343
are kept smouldering with wet sods until the spring, when the 387
huts are half-full of ashes and the soot-laden roof-sods are ready to collapse. The roof is then broken up and the soot and ashes spread on the ridges as potato manure (Fig. 39).

Although I know of no parallel in other parts of Ireland it 342
seems likely that the custom of removing the roof-covering of the winter-house was once fairly general, at any rate in houses of the old Achill type, which in many details closely resembled the Hebridean black-house. I should be inclined to correlate the custom with the roped style of thatching, which betrays little of the care of other styles and in the old form where the ropes were weighted by hanging stones had a distinctly ephemeral appearance. Where sods were used for walls as well as roofs the whole house would have become a convenient source of fertilizers for the infield. This may be the explanation of the remark made by Dr. Madden that in the south of Ireland 'cottar houses of dirt, sticks and straw were generally removed once a year'.[1] There are indications met with in excavations of houses in Dark Age raths that reconstructions were more frequent than would be justified by ordinary wear and tear. In Sutherland, down to the early nineteenth century, sod-houses were abandoned periodically and pulled down to be utilized as manure, a new hut being erected near by. In this instance the cause was said to be that the accumulation of filth had rendered the place uninhabitable,[2] but this underestimates the tolerance of the Gael. The soot-houses, at any rate, seem to perpetuate old custom, and one thinks back to the earliest days of agriculture when crops were sown in the highly productive soils of newly burnt woodland. Faith in the use of fire persisted longer than the woods. Burning the land, we shall see in Chapter XI, was a very general practice down to the famine years when rough pasture was being reclaimed for potato-growing.

We come now to a group of stone structures built to serve as 343
kilns for drying or burning. The drying-kilns were principally 251
needed for drying corn before it was ground, though flax-drying kilns were also required in the days when the fibre was extracted

[1]Dr. Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions* (1738).
[2]Quoted in F. T. Smith, *The Land of Britain*, Part 3, Sutherland.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

343 by hand. The corn-drying kiln is a culture-trait clearly adapted
● 251 to the climatic conditions of the Atlantic coasts of Europe. In extreme cases, as in the Faroe Islands—where even barley does not ripen fully—the ears are kiln-dried before thrashing, but the purpose of the Irish kilns was to harden the thrashed grain before grinding. They can be traced back archaeologically to the last centuries B.C. and on present evidence their introduction may be linked chronologically with grain-storage pits and with the rotary quern. Thus the custom of parching the grain in the straw would be a survival of an older culture layer associated with the saddle-quern and the mortar and possibly with harvesting by pulling the corn by the roots.

One early type of kiln was made of wattles plastered with clay, and was perhaps used like an oven, being heated before the corn was put in it to dry, but those which have come down into recent times were stone-lined pits into which a long flue was led. The fuel used was peat. It is stated that down to famine times every townland in some parts of the country had its kiln, though in other parts they went out of use long ago when landlords, following Anglo-Norman custom, insisted that all corn should be ground at the mill. In Co. Cavan for example, 'every estate has its cornmill and the tenantry is bound under severe penalty to grind their corn thereat and pay toll'.[1] These watermills should be distinguished from the native clackmills, [376] built over little streams and driven by small horizontal wheels. They were characteristically held in joint ownership, as were the kilns. The Mayo kiln is described as resembling a large tobacco pipe, the circular stone-lined bowl being dug into a sloping bank and the horizontal stem or flue emerging lower down the slope. A bee-hive cap of timber and thatch was the only part visible. In it a straw-covered wattled hatch gave access to the kiln floor, a wooden frame half-way down the bowl of the pipe, on which thrashed sheaves were spread, heads to centre. The grain, laid on this, took about twenty-four hours to dry. The taste of the oatmeal made from grain so dried was said to be delicious.[2] A man who had seen a similar kiln working in Co. Antrim told me that the corn was laid on a linen sheet

[1] C. Coote, *Cavan* (1802), 251.
[2] H. T. Knox, *P.R.I.A.*, 26 (1906–7), 265.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

resting on a well-prepared bed of drawn straw spread on a hurdle, and he recalled the phrase 'soft as kiln bedding' to illustrate the care devoted to the operation. The Gaelic language has quite an extensive vocabulary describing every detail of the floor and the bedding of a corn-kiln. Because of the risk of fire, the Laws stipulated that the kiln must not be placed within so many paces of the dwelling house.

Lint-kilns, for drying flax after it had been taken from the retting dams, were in general use in Ulster in the days of hand-scutching, and a few half-ruined specimens are still in existence. As with corn-kilns—and lime-kilns—they were of two kinds, which may be termed pot-kilns and pipe-kilns. The former are described in Co. Armagh as 'small sod buildings, left open at the top . . . built by the sides of fences near the cabins: they are four or five feet in diameter, and have a hurdle of sticks placed across them at a convenient height (about four feet) on which a small quantity of flax is spread to dry over a turf fire'.[1] The stone-built kilns, known in Co. Tyrone as 'farrows' were similar in construction to the 'tobacco pipe' corn-kilns. The flax, well shaken and loose, was placed on end on a wattled platform set across the bowl of the pipe. When dried it was beaten on a melling-stone with a heavy wooden mell until every stalk was flattened and it then passed to the hand-scutcher.

As the corn-drying kiln has been superseded by the kiln attached to the country grist-mill, so the small lime-kiln has given way, over most of the country, to the large quarry-kiln. At the same time coal has replaced turf as a fuel. The little circular pot-kiln of sods or stones filled with alternate layers of turf and limestone may be met with in the west, but in general the home-burning of lime did not long survive the Great Famine. Down to that time, wherever limestone could be obtained, almost every farm or farm cluster had a lime-kiln. It was the importation of guano and later of artificial manure that put an end to a most advantageous practice. The application of lime to acid soils is a comparatively recent practice, but one likes to think that the little pot-kiln was in use long ago to burn lime or sea-shells for the whitewash with which the mud houses were lightened and brightened. Kelp-kilns, similarly (see Chapter

[1] I. Binns, *Miseries and Beauties* (1837), I, 178.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

how these are used by the pollen-specialists to build up a bog chronology. Some, like the magnificent gold ornaments of the Bronze Age, were deposited in the bogs, or in lakes where the bogs later grew, for magical purposes. Other objects were sometimes hidden in the hope of being recovered, and still others were thrown into a bog hole when they were worn out. All have been almost perfectly preserved by the peat, whether made of metal or organic material such as wood, leather or clothing. None of the discoveries which occasionally astonish the turf-cutter and relieve the monotony of his labours is more mysterious than the 'bog butter' which is found in wooden vessels or baskets, occasionally in containers of cloth, bark or skin, in quantities ranging from a few pounds to as much as a hundredweight (Fig. 65). During the first half of last century,

FIG. 65. Methers and wooden cups (Belfast Museum). The first example, from Co. Londonderry, contains bog butter. The cups are from the Aran Islands.

when the pressure of population and industrial needs led to immense inroads on the turf bogs, an astonishing number of finds was made. The 'butter' was a perquisite of the finder, and there are records of its being taken to the fair to be sold as grease for wheel-cars, which, like the 'singing carts' of Spain, were very noisy. In fact it resembles lard rather than butter and analysis shows that its composition has changed, but there can be no doubt that it was originally butter. There are many references to the practice of burying butter in bogs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the explanations offered are also many. Petty thought it was done in order to

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

make the butter rancid, since the Irish, he says, preferred strong butter.[1] An eighteenth century writer states that some of the buried butter was

> So strong, a dog with help of wind,
> By scenting out, with ease might find.[2]

Others have claimed that it was buried to mature and purify it, and one writer has seen an explanation in the need to have butter available at Lent. It is reasonable to suppose that the surplus butter of summer would be stored in this way once the preservative properties of peat were known, but the practice is certainly pre-Christian in origin. None of the Irish finds has been securely dated—the majority of the wooden containers have an ageless 'medieval' appearance—but a discovery in Skye was satisfactorily dated to the very beginning of the Christian era (it contained not only cowhairs but some strands from the head of a fair-haired dairymaid).[3] I am inclined to think that a practice which came to be generally adopted for utilitarian reasons had its origin in magic, and that deposits were originally made in the hope of appeasing the powers of evil and inducing an abundant flow of milk from the pastures.[4] The custom may well have originated during the crisis of the climatic deterioration in the last centuries of the pre-Christian era. Surviving folklore is full of the magic properties of butter, and in the west of Ireland it is known that lumps of butter were thrown into loughs and springs through which cattle were driven in order to restore them to health. It seems from the accounts of discoveries in the bogs that some of the butter containers had been thrown into a bog hole rather than buried. Later, no doubt, it became the practice to bury butter in order to preserve it, but if this had always been so I cannot think that there would have been so many unclaimed deposits left to await the slane of the turf-cutter. It should be noticed that the custom of preserving butter in bogs or in moist earth is found also in Scandinavia, Iceland, India and Morocco.[5] It is interesting that bog butter

[1] Sir W. Petty, *The Political Anatomy of Ireland*, 82.
[2] W(illiam) M(offatt), *The Western Isle*, Canto 2.
[3] J. Ritchie, *P.S.A.S.*, 75, 5–22.
[4] E. E. Evans, *U.J.A.*, 10, 59–65.
[5] ibid., 59.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

314
[412]

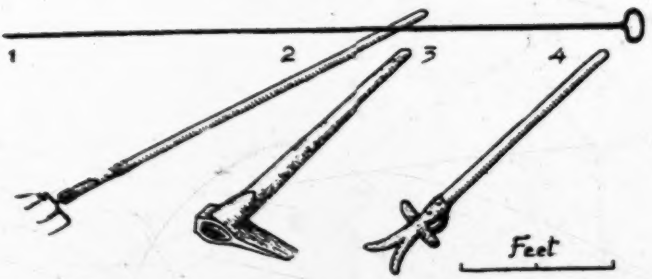

FIG. 66. Some tools used in the bog. (1) Trying iron for locating buried timber, Co. Cork. (2) Turf fork, Co. Armagh. (3) Fir-hatchet or 'finhow', Co. Armagh. (4) Fir-rooter, Co. Galway.

314
172
251

contains no salt, but the explanation may be that it was difficult to obtain and that its addition was not necessary when the butter was preserved by burying it. This is confirmed by the following quotation which shows also that the custom of preserving butter in a bog-hole was still remembered a generation ago in Co. Limerick. Lady Carbery writes: 'In their grandfather's time, butter, flavoured with wild garlic and unsalted (salt cost too much to buy except in small quantities) used to be put in a bog-hole and left to ripen.'[1]

[1]M. Carbery, *The Farm by Lough Gur*, 128.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

springs when fodder was scarce cattle, sheep and horses found edible seaweed on the shore. Scottish planters in Co. Down found that their sheep 'kept fat and wholesome all winter and spring by feeding on the oare.'[1] This is nowadays one of nature's neglected resources partly, no doubt, owing to enclosure and the loss of grazing rights. It has been claimed as the result of experiments that the feeding value of *Ascophyllum nodosum* (knob wrack), which grows towards high tide mark, is almost equal to that of meadow hay. Certain species of seaweed are still, however, gathered for human consumption—carrageen or Irish moss (*Chondrus crispus*) sloke or laver (*Porphyra*), dulse (*Rhodymenia*) and dulaman (probably chanelled weed)—whether as medicine or 'kitchen', that is a tasty morsel to be chewed between meals, or boiled to be eaten with potatoes. In lean times the kitchen might become the staple, and a writer in the 1830's stated that when the potatoes gave out 'hundreds of the people may be seen going to the seaside to gather dulaman.'[2] Carrageen, besides being made into a jelly possessing many virtues, was used as a thickener for milk.

The most profitable way of exploiting seaweed down to recent times was for the burning of kelp, which became a considerable business among shore-dwellers in the eighteenth century as the growth of industry stimulated the production of soap, bleaching materials and glass: more recently kelp was chiefly in demand for the preparation of iodine. But there are dimly remembered ways of utilizing seaweed ashes in the home which would make kelp-burning a traditional occupation. In the Western Isles of Scotland kelp-burning is said to have been introduced from Ireland about 1735, but there too it must have been an ancient custom, for Martin Martin tells us at the end of the seventeenth century that seals, seafowl and fish were preserved in 'the ashes of burnt seaware'.[3] (Cheese, we learn, was preserved in the same way, or 'lapped in tang'). Kelp was made by burning the thick stems of tangle (*Laminaria*) or other coarse weeds—to which, as well as to the ashes, the name kelp is applied—which are thrown up in the winter storms or

[1] W. Montgomery, *Description of Ardes Barony* (1683), 139.
[2] J. Binns, *Miseries and Beauties*, 1, 50.
[3] Martin Martin, *The Western Isles*, 135, 159.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

223 Faeroe Islands[1] were practised in a region which has so many culture parallels with the northern isles.

225 Down to recent times coast-dwellers also took their toll of seals and porpoises. 'We thought more of a seal in those days', wrote Thomas O'Crohan of the Blaskets, 'than of the very best pig.'[2] They were valued too for their skins, which as we have mentioned made covers for the curraghs and shoes for the rock-climbers. Seal hunting was dangerous work, sometimes in-[481] volving swimming into the underwater caves where they breed. [292] The seal catchers in County Cork wore 'bags quilted with charcoal' on their arms, for the animals let go their hold when they bit on the crunching charcoal.[3] In the Blaskets porpoises were slaughtered after being driven ashore by boats, and then 'everyone was crimson with the blood of the sea-pigs'.[4] The [251] meat was salted down.

226 Crabs and lobsters, like so many other seafoods, are now neglected and even despised, though there are commercial [228] fisheries in areas accessible to markets. Apart from creel fishing they were formerly taken from the rock holes where they lie, either by hand or with an iron hook. In County Kerry one man would hold another under the water with an oar while he [481] searched the holes. The old-style pots or creels are circular, [227] with a flat weighted bottom, sometimes hinged: the principle rods are of hazel or even whin, the woven sides of sally, laurel or heather stems. They vary in pattern from one district to another, as do the round-topped rectangular net-creels which have taken their place almost everywhere (Fig. 76). The lobstermen are a hardy breed, many of them having turned [578] from long-line fishing, and they have kept up the feuds and rivalries to which the long-liners were addicted. In both types of fishing the search for bait is an exacting occupation. I illustrate a special fork used for digging lug worms, and also a mussel rake (Fig. 74).

222 674 If it is difficult to obtain information about the history of such tools and activities as these, which have been the concern

[1] K. Williamson, *The Atlantic Islands*, ch. 6. [Text continues on p. 232]
[2] T. O'Crohan, *The Islandman*, 99.
[3] E. Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland*, 2, 127.
[4] T. O'Crohan, op. cit., 12.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

line grows as if by magic as the quills rotate in nimble fingers. 283
A fresh supply of hairs is inserted from time to time by removing the plugs. I illustrate an example of this fascinating apparatus made for me by Mr. T. J. Barron of Knockbride, Co. Cavan (Fig. 81). Mr. A. T. Lucas has described the Cavan

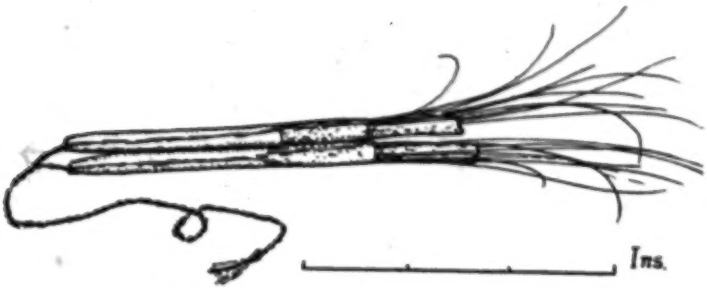

FIG. 81. Quills used for making horsehair fishing lines, Co. Cavan. The quills are rolled between the forefingers.

specimens and others from Co. Mayo.[1] In Cavan the lines were [226]
made for bream fishing: the bream were both split, salted and [251]
dried and stored fresh in little ponds on the lake shores. Around
the coasts—I have seen examples from the Aran Islands and
from Co. Down—a more complicated machine was made for
twisting long lines of hemp, three spindles being rotated by
pulling on an endless cord twisted round each spindle.[2] A very [171]
similar device is employed in China for making bamboo ropes
for raising coal in primitive mines. On the shores of Lough
Neagh the long lines are manufactured in rustic rope-walks.
These night-lines, which have tended to replace draft-nets, are
set in lengths of up to four miles. The season of yellow (feeding) 226
eel fishing runs from March to October. It is illegal, as we have
mentioned, but shows no signs of being given up. The eel
fishermen claim immemorial rights and are not deterred by the
fines imposed when they are caught. Their vocabulary, like that
of the men who work the eel weirs on the River Bann, has many [192]
words which have come down from Gaelic and perhaps from

[1] A. T. Lucas, *Journal of the Galway Arch. and Hist. Soc.*, 24 (1951), 111–14.
[2] E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country*, Fig. 63.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

244 quarter-acre garden. The seed potatoes are cut so that each segment has two "eyes," and they are "stabbed" into the ridges in three rows with a digging stick, deep enough to escape the foraging of birds and rats, yet above the decaying seaweed [462] which can "burn" the seed and cause it not to yield. It is not uncommon for [857] women and children to stab seeds while the man of the house is trenching ridges in another part of the field. Many kinds of spuds are grown by the islanders, some of which are "early" and can be harvested before the end of June; the folk argue the relative merits of varieties of potatoes just as they do the use of fertilizers and farming techniques.

221 Planting must be completed before the cuckoo arrives in late April and 244 sounds its call, and the person who is still seeding when the bird first is heard is 626 the subject of ridicule. The laggard in some parts of Ireland is called a "cuckoo farmer," and it is said in Inis Beag that one who is "lazy about planting is lazy about everything." A tale is told of a Castle villager who saw another man, considered by the islanders to be overly indolent, cutting potato seeds in early April, whereupon he climbed the wall of the castle and imitated the song of the cuckoo. The victim of the practical joke gave up his job in disgust and fed the seed to his poultry. My wife and I witnessed a heated argument in a pub over the date of arrival of the first cuckoo of 1960. Word was passed among the men, some of whom were still planting, that a lighthouse keeper had heard the song five days before. The keeper was denounced as an exaggerator and "troublemaker," and agreement was reached that the bird always is heard first in Low Village and not at the back of the island. The official date of the cuckoo's arrival later was set at April 27th—15 days after its alleged appearance at the lighthouse.

244 "Late" potatoes are harvested from the ridges by spade as needed from mid-July until the end of October, at which time the gardens are emptied (see [251] Fig. 7). The harvested spuds are separated in the fields into those to be fed to livestock, those to be used for seeding the next year, and those to be eaten; then [626] they are transported by horse or ass to be stored in outbuildings. Just as the person who has failed to complete seeding by the time the cuckoo arrives is censured by his neighbors, so is the one who has not removed all of his potatoes from the ground by mid-November. As a man said to me when evaluating potential sons-in-law, "The father of a girl would think twice about marrying off his daughter to a man who didn't have his spuds in by the middle of the month."

262 Supplementing the potato dominated diet of the folk are other locally 244 grown vegetables: cabbages, carrots, onions, turnips, parsnips, and lettuce. They are planted between March and May in ridges in much the same manner as spuds—on fallowing land, in small areas within fields containing indigenous soils which have been improved for this purpose, and in gardens in the villages where [443] they are readily accessible. The more prosperous Inis Beag families also avail [462] themselves of canned peas, beans, and carrots sold in the shops. It is usual for men to plant vegetables, but both men and women tend them to maturity and collect the plants after early September as they are needed for the table.

246 Once the potato fields are emptied, most farmers plant grass in them before 221 the coming of winter. This allows the hay to be cut in June and July of the following year, after which more grass will come in for fall and winter pasturage. Grass